

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 342 101

EA 023 707

AUTHOR Purvis, Johnny R.; Leonard, Rex L.
TITLE Judgment Analysis of Potential for Employment Termination as Seen by Teachers.
PUB DATE 91
NOTE 22p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Attendance; *Certification; Elementary Secondary Education; Lesson Plans; *Teacher Dismissal; *Teacher Placement; *Teacher Response
IDENTIFIERS *Enthusiasm

ABSTRACT

This paper summarizes a study designed to examine teachers' perceptions concerning possible employment termination and whether these perceptions differ according to primary teaching assignment. A random sample of 504 elementary, middle/junior high, and high school teachers was selected from 21 school districts in a southern state. Teachers were sent an instrument to assess: (1) their overall perception associated with potential for employment termination; and (2) their perceptions associated with employment termination according to 13 given offenses. Judgment analysis was used to analyze 306 returned questionnaires. There were significant differences in group profiles regarding the relationship of perceived termination threat for specific situations to an overall potential for termination. Elementary teachers perceived situations associated with teaching qualifications and absenteeism as primary contributors to the overall threat of termination. For middle school teachers, the greatest contributors to overall threat were failing to improve enthusiasm and preparing unsatisfactory lesson plans. Secondary teachers also had failure to improve enthusiasm as a major contributor, but added three other situations involving lateness for work, certification, and refusal to supervise students. Teacher effectiveness and morale could be enhanced if teachers thoroughly understood the reasons for possible termination. Included are several data tables and 10 references. (Author/MLH)

* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *

ED342101

Termination

1

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

☒ This document has been reproduced as
received from the person or organization
originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve
reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this docu-
ment do not necessarily represent official
OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS
MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

R. Leonard

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Judgment Analysis of Potential for Employment Termination as

Perceived by Teachers

Johnny R. Purvis and Rex L. Leonard

University of Southern Mississippi

TEACHER TERMINATION

2

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

EA 023 707

Abstract

A random sample of 504 elementary, middle/junior high, and high school teachers was selected from 21 school districts in a southern state. Teachers were sent an instrument designed to assess (1) their overall perception associated with potential for employment termination and (2) their perception associated with employment termination according to thirteen given situations. Judgment analysis was used to analyze 306 questionnaires returned by the selected elementary, middle/junior high, and high school teachers. There were significant differences in profiles of the three groups regarding the extent to which the threat of termination for specific situations related to an overall potential for termination. Elementary teachers perceived situations associated with teaching qualifications and absenteeism as being primary contributors to the overall threat of termination. Secondary and middle/junior high teachers had different profiles of loadings that pertained to teaching enthusiasm and failure to meet certification. Profiles of the teacher groups were discussed.

Judgment Analysis of Potential for Employment Termination as
Perceived by Teachers

In recent years, a number of teacher termination suits against public elementary and secondary teachers have occurred. For example, Hooker (1988) identified over 4,000 lawsuits that involved teachers in state appellate courts and federal courts between 1965 and 1986. These cases often pertained to teacher employment areas that included suspension, removal, reassignment, incompetence, realignment of positions, and other employment related issues.

Ellis (1984) found in surveys of parents and school administrators that incompetence in the teaching profession is a major concern. He found that 45% of the public school parents/guardians polled felt there were teachers in the local schools who should be fired. In addition, Ellis discovered that school administrators estimate that between 5 and 15% of their teachers perform in an unsatisfactory manner.

The literature seems replete with books, articles, and legal briefs written about reasons for teacher dismissal, due process procedures, and pitfalls of processing teacher dismissal cases. A review of teacher dismissal cases throughout the nation during the mid and late 80's revealed that in 150 out of 400 cases, the courts agreed with the school districts' decisions to terminate teachers (Informational Research Systems, Inc. 1984 - 1990 editions and West Publishing Co., 1985 -1990).

Teacher dismissals appear to fit into the categories of reduction of force, unprofessional conduct, or contract violations. Unprofessional conduct is interpreted as immoral acts, assault and battery, fraud, and insubordination. Examples of contract violations are neglect of duty, failure to meet certification requirements, unauthorized absences, lack of application of pedagogical concepts, and/or other academic deficiencies. West Publishing Company, publishers of the West Education Law Reporter, (1989), published reviews of approximately 60 teacher termination cases that occurred in the nation's public elementary and secondary schools during 1989.

Maslow (1968) reported that humans are wanting beings, that is, they were almost always attempting to satisfy some need. Once a need is satisfied, they turn to another need, then another, and so on. Maslow created a hierarchy of needs in which individuals move through in the quest for need satisfaction. The hierarchy of needs that Maslow created includes physiological needs, safety needs, social needs, esteem needs, and self-actualization needs. In accordance with Maslow's hierarchy of needs, teachers's employment status as well as apprehension about their professional responsibilities would probably have an impact upon their social, esteem, and self-actualization needs.

An example would be a teacher exhibiting behaviors associated with Maslow's "esteem needs." "Esteem needs" refer to those needs pertaining to feeling important and receiving recognition. Even though it is important for teachers to desire fulfillment of these

needs, their acquisition through exhibition of behavior in an unprofessional or unlawful manner could elicit a teacher's dismissal from employment. Thus, as a teacher strives to fulfill this very important need, professional and personal boundaries must be recognized. Another one of Maslow's hierarchy of needs includes "self-actualization." This is the highest need in Maslow's hierarchy and is associated with individuals meeting their full potential or "becoming everything they are capable of becoming."

Teachers need to be well aware of their professional responsibilities so they can be knowledgeable of the boundaries that govern their actions. Through an awareness of responsibilities and administrative expectations, teachers should feel more competent and secure in fulfilling their professional obligations. Consequently, a teacher who does not fulfill employment responsibilities would know his or her behavior was beyond the parameters of professional expectations.

A review of research pertaining to staff harmony, which is often associated with teacher effectiveness (Educational Research Service Inc., 1983), found that administrator-teacher relationships in an effective school were highly collaborative in a "family" climate. Thus, both teachers and the school's administrator must be honest and open about behaviors and situations that may place a teacher in danger of being dismissed or transferred to another position. Through collaboration and open communication with each other the school's administration and

teachers will be well aware of their professional boundaries and limitations. A reduction in secretiveness and doubt between the administration and faculty will result in staff harmony and, thus, a more effective school.

According to a report in the publication entitled Effective Schools: A Summary of Research (Educational Research Service Inc., 1983), teachers in more academically successful schools rate their principals high on various standards of helpfulness and general standards of performance which include; teacher support, student discipline, and enhancement of parent/guardian relations. These concepts are directly related to perceptions teachers have toward their employment status and the manner in which they fulfill their duties.

One of the five correlates of an effective school includes "school climate" (Lezotte, 1983). Included within this correlate are the school's policies, practices, and procedures which are necessary for the general operation of the school. Also included are teachers' beliefs and attitudes that impact instructional patterns, behavioral practices, and student learning. Teachers' assessment of their employment status and professional responsibilities in accordance to a district's policies, practices, and procedures will impact teacher morale; thus, student achievement is impacted.

Although volumes of literature have been written on teacher employment termination the perceptions of teachers regarding this matter has not been extensively researched in a systematic

fashion. Nor has the relationship between teacher apprehension about employment termination and teacher effectiveness in job performance been studied.

In an effort to understand more about the impact of possible employment termination on teachers, this research project was designed to examine one phase of the process, i.e., the perceptions of teachers about their potential for termination of employment and whether these perceptions differ according to the classifications of primary teaching assignment. Specifically, the purpose of the study was to determine the nature of the relationship between perceptions of potential for termination concerning key problem areas and an overall perception of potential for termination based on the total environment of the teacher. Judgment Analysis (JAN) was then used to analyze these relationships and establish perception profiles according to teaching assignment.

Method

An instrument was developed by the researchers for use in this study. The instrument consisted of 14 items to assess elementary, middle/junior high, and secondary classroom teachers' perceptions or awareness of the possibility for their termination if they committed any one or more of a group of 13 selected offenses and an overall perception of the potential for employment termination. The offenses used were developed from selected literature and a review of court cases. After the development of

the instrument, a panel consisting of four university professors was selected to review the instrument for ease of understanding, face validity, and convenience for administration. The final edition of the instrument (Table 1) was completed after review by the panel. A four-point likert type scale was used to assess the degree of potential for termination as follows: (1) immediate termination, (2) strong possibility for termination, (3) possible termination, (4) and no grounds for termination.

Twenty-one school districts in a southern state were randomly selected from 63 school districts who are members of an education consortium. After the selection of 21 school districts, 504 elementary, middle/junior high, and secondary school teachers were randomly sampled from the districts. These individuals were sent an instrument along with a self-addressed, stamped envelope. This procedure enabled the teachers to give a true assessment of their potential for termination relevant to selected situations regarding their particular teaching environment.

Procedure

Judgment Analysis (JAN) was used to compare three levels of teaching assignment, i.e., elementary, middle/junior high, and secondary on 306 of the instruments which were returned. JAN is a regression based technique that tested the relationship of the perceptions on selected teaching situations with the overall perception of potential for employment termination. Moreover, JAN uses a hierarchical grouping technique, which allows a systematic

use of prediction equations which simulate a group judgment policy or profile. This procedure incorporates the perceptions given within each grouping of respondents and correlates these with an overall perception using multiple regression. The patterns of correlations in the groups are then compared for similarity.

JAN displays the difference between groups as a measure of consistency in the way that individual perceptions of profile characteristics relate to the overall perception of the potential for employment termination. It does not indicate a discrepancy between means or variances of these ratings such as can be obtained from analysis of variance techniques. Thus, JAN was utilized to determine if a perceptual difference existed between the profiles of the three categories of teachers.

Results

A regression model was formulated combining all three levels of the teaching assignments to include the first 13 individual questionnaire items as predictors. The last item which was the respondent's assessment of the overall potential for termination was used as the criterion. There was a significant correlation between the criterion and the questionnaire items, $R = .469$, $R^2 = .220$ (RSQ), $F(13,246) = 5.34$, $p < .05$. These results showed that the assessment for potential termination regarding 13 specific situations was significantly related to the overall assessment.

Insert Table 1 about here

In the first iteration of JAN, Table 1, all three levels of teaching were assumed to have separate profiles or systems in regard to how their overall assessments correlated with the other 13 items, $RSQ = .247$. The second iteration of JAN collapsed the two most compatible systems. These systems were (2) middle school and (3) secondary. The resulting RSQ was $.220$, with a resulting loss of $.027$. This drop did not exceed $.05$ which was used to assess an evaluative difference according to Ward and Hook (1963). Although collapsing the two systems did not result in a marked loss in RSQ , systems 2 and 3 did comprise the most similar pair at that stage. The next iteration, however, placed all groups together resulting in an RSQ loss of $.062$ from the first stage. Thus indicating that the levels of teaching should be considered independently. That is, the nature of the multiple relationship between the overall assessment of potential for termination and the assessment of potential on the individual situations appears to be different among those teachers according to their teaching assignment.

Insert Table 2 about here

In order to define the assessment profiles of the teacher groups, the correlations between assessments of each situation and the overall assessment of potential for termination were computed by the JAN procedure. Table 2 contains these correlations which are typically called validities. Elementary teachers loaded

highest on situations 6, 7, 8, 12, and 13 which are associated with teaching, teaching qualification, and absenteeism. The other groups have markedly different patterns. For example, secondary teachers loaded high as did teachers of elementary on teaching enthusiasm, lateness in reporting for work, and failure to meet certification. However, secondary teachers had a much higher loading on refusal to supervise students. Middle school teachers loaded highest on taking school property off campus without the principal's permission, preparing unsatisfactory lesson plans, and failure to improve enthusiasm for teaching in the classroom. Middle school/junior high teachers had markedly higher loading on the latter two situations than they did on all others.

Insert Table 3 about here

Analysis of variance were performed on all items of the questionnaire to investigate whether there were significant differences between the mean assessments of potential for termination according to teaching group. Table 3 contains these results as well as the mean for each group on each situation including the overall. Actual differences among the means of the groups were small on all items. Only three situations, refusal to supervise students during morning break, making sexually suggestive remarks to students, and failure to improve enthusiasm for teaching had significant differences among the teaching

groups. In all three situations middle/junior high and secondary teachers had the highest means indicating that they perceived less threat from these situations than did elementary teachers.

Discussion

The emphasis of this research was to examine the relationship between situational assessments of the potential for termination and an overall sense of threat of termination. Even though profiles of these correlations within the three teaching groups were different, they were similar with respect to situation six, failure to improve enthusiasm for teaching. This situation was perceived by all three groups as making a high contribution to an overall assessment of potential for termination.

Most differences were exhibited within a certain block of situations having to do with teaching, certification, and absenteeism. That is, these items were perceived as different in regard to how they contributed to an overall perceived threat for termination. For middle school teachers, the greatest contributors to overall threat were (6) failure to improve enthusiasm, and (4) preparing unsatisfactory lesson plans. This result could be explained by the characteristics associated with middle/junior high school students. Administrators may hold teachers more accountable for lesson plans which are purposeful and motivational. Also, teachers may be more aware of the need for motivating students. Secondary teachers also had (6) as a major contributor but added three other situations having to do

with (7) lateness for work, (8) certification, (1) and refusal to supervise students.

These findings may suggest more stringent expectations from administrators for teacher punctuality and for supervising students. Moreover, educational reform and shifting enrollment patterns may produce more teacher awareness of the need to certify and recertify. Elementary teachers, on the other hand, focused more on (13) instructional techniques, and (12) absenteeism as major contributors to overall threat. Traditionally, elementary teachers' training emphasizes instructional techniques rather than content. Thus there could be a greater expectation for elementary teachers to implement a variety of teaching strategies.

Among the perceived threats for termination and the manner in which these correlated with the overall threat at the school, there were more similarities than there were differences among the three groups of teachers surveyed. Analysis of variance of the situations revealed three situations with a significant difference but the overall differences were small. Teachers of middle/junior high schools and secondary schools were not as threatened as their colleagues in elementary schools about refusal to supervise, making sexually suggestive remarks, and failure to improve enthusiasm.

Due to the age of middle/junior high and secondary students, middle/junior high and secondary teachers perhaps conclude that the threat of termination is not as strong for them in regard to the foregoing situations. However, such an outlook should be

considered a false sense of security because as the age of students increases their capacity to engage in behaviors which could cause faculty termination often increases.

It is important for teachers to have a thorough understanding of the reasons for which they could be terminated. By being knowledgeable of these reasons, a teacher would have parameters in which they could govern both their professional and personal responsibilities. Thus, teacher effectiveness and morale could be enhanced.

Additional research needs to be conducted on the impact of the threat of termination, either perceived or not perceived, on teacher effectiveness and morale.

Table 1

Stages of JAN for Grouping Levels of Teaching

Stage	JAN System no.	Levels of Teaching Clusters	R ²	R ² loss in stage 1
1	3	(1)(2)(3)*	.247	
2	2	(1)(2, 3)	.220	.027
3	1	(1, 2, 3)	.185	.062

* 1 = Elementary 2 = Middle or Junior High 3 = Secondary

Table 2

Validities by Level 2 of Teaching

(Correlations of each situation with the overall rating)

Termination Situation	1	2	3
1. Refusal to supervise students during your morning break which were assigned to you by your principal.	.10	.02	.24
2. Making sexually suggestive remarks to students.	.27	.15	.23
3. Taking school property off campus without permission from your principal.	.20	.32	.22
4. Preparing unsatisfactory and illegible lesson plans.	.14	.42	.23
5. Habitual abuse of alcohol or other drugs.	.07	.15	.16
6. Failure to improve your enthusiasm for teaching in the classroom.	.31	.44	.26
7. Excessive lateness in reporting to work.	.32	.17	.27

(table continues)

Termination

17

Termination Situation	1	2	3
8. Failure to meet state certification requirements in teaching assignment.	.29	.23	.28
9. Drop in student enrollment that causes a budget deficit.	.12	.19	.15
10. Altering a student's answers which were given on a state sponsored examination.	.26	.14	.13
11. Abusive treatment of students.	.23	.13	.19
12. Taking an unauthorized week leave of absence during the school year to go on a vacation.	.37	.24	.14
13. Consistently employing ineffective instructional techniques.	.29	.30	.20
Usable N =	114	71	108

* 1 = Elementary 2 = Middle or Junior High 3 = Secondary

Table 3

Means for Each Situation by Level of Teaching

Termination Situation	1	2	3
1. Refusal to supervise students during your morning break which were assigned to you by your principal.	*2.6	2.8	2.9
2. Making sexually suggestive remarks to students.	*1.5	1.7	1.8
3. Taking school property off campus without permission from your principal.	2.9	3.0	2.9
4. Preparing unsatisfactory and illegible lesson plans.	3.1	3.1	3.1
5. Habitual abuse of alcohol or other drugs.	1.6	1.6	1.6
6. Failure to improve your enthusiasm for teaching in the classroom.	*2.9	3.3	3.1
7. Excessive lateness in reporting to work.	2.7	2.7	2.6
8. Failure to meet state certification requirements in teaching assignment.	1.8	1.8	1.7

(table continues)

Termination Situation	1	2	3
9. Drop in student enrollment that causes a budget deficit.	3.3	3.0	3.1
10. Altering a student's answers which were given on a state sponsored examination.	1.6	1.6	1.6
11. Abusive treatment of students.	1.7	1.7	1.6
12. Taking an unauthorized week leave of absence during the school year to go on a vacation.	2.7	2.6	2.4
13. Consistently employing ineffective instructional techniques.	2.5	2.7	2.6
14. Please circle the rating that best represents your overall assessment of potential for possible termination in your present teaching position as it applies to the foregoing situations.	3.0	3.0	3.0

Usable N = 114 71 108

* Significantly different averages at .05 by ANOVA

* 1 = Elementary 2 = Middle or Junior High 3 = Secondary

References

- Education Research Service, Inc. (1983). Effective Schools: A Summary of Research. Arlington, VA: Education Research Service, Inc., p. 29.
- Education Research Service, Inc. (1983). Effective Schools: A Summary of Research. Arlington, VA: Education Research Service, Inc. pp. 34-35.
- Ellis, T. I. (1984). Dismissing Incompetent Teachers (Report No. EA-017-908). Eugene, OR: University of Oregon, Center for Advanced Technology in Education. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 259 448)
- Hooker, C. P. (1988). Teachers and the Courts, 1963 - 1986. West Education Law Reporter, 48, (1), 7-18.
- Informational Research Systems, Inc., (1984-1990). Deskbook Encyclopedia of American School Law. Rosemount, MN.
- Lezotte, L. (Ed.). 1983. The five correlates of an effective school. The Effective School Report, 1, (1), 3-4.
- Maslow, A. H. (1968). Personality problems and personality growth. In D. E. Hamachek (Ed.). Human dynamics in psychology and education (pp. 641-649). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Ward, Jr., J. H., & Hook, M. E. (1963). Application of an hierarchical grouping procedure to a problem of grouping profiles. Educational and Psychological Measurement, 23, (1), 69-81.

West Publishing Co. (December 12, 1985 - May 24, 1990). West
Education Law Reporter (Vols. 28-59). St. Paul, MN: Author.

West Publishing Co. (January 5, 1989 - December 21, 1989). West
Education Law Reporter (Vols. 49-56). St. Paul, MN: Author.